

STATE OF KANSAS

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 241 SOUTH
TOPEKA, KS 66612



PHONE: (785) 296-3232
GOVERNOR.KANSAS.GOV

GOVERNOR LAURA KELLY

April 19, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, 1st Floor, West Wing
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

Thank you for your bold leadership in rebuilding our alliances and re-establishing the United States' leadership role in the world. As your Administration develops its national security strategy to meet the growing threats facing our country, I strongly urge continued support for the F-35 Lightning II program.

The F-35 is the backbone of the future fighter force for the Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and our closest allies. It is critical that the Department of Defense (DoD) continue to increase production of our nation's only 5th generation stealth fighter to ensure we maintain air dominance for the decades to come. The F-35 strengthens national security and international partnerships while providing high quality engineering and manufacturing jobs throughout the country.

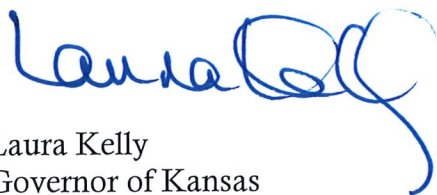
More than 1,800 supplier companies in 48 states and Puerto Rico work on the F-35 program, resulting in more than 254,000 direct and indirect jobs and making a \$49 billion economic impact annually. The F-35 is a critical component of America's, and my state's, engineering and manufacturing economy. In Kansas alone, more than 42 companies help build the F-35 providing more than 5,290 direct and indirect jobs and a total annual economic impact of \$617 million. Kansas is proud of our role in America's aviation history, so it's only appropriate that so many of our citizens contribute to the production of the most advanced fighter jet ever produced.

The United States and our allies are flying more than 625 F-35s today, operating from 27 locations around the world. It is critical that the DoD and our allies stay the course by adequately investing in the F-35 fleet to continue driving down sustainment costs across the enterprise as the program ramps up to full-rate production. Thanks to strong support and commitment to the program, the cost per aircraft has been significantly reduced. As a result, the F-35 is now below the cost of any new 4th generation tactical fighter. I am concerned by recent press coverage suggesting the DoD may back away from the numbers of F-35s planned for our armed forces. Were DoD to reduce the program of record, it would have significant economic impact throughout the America's manufacturing sector and in the State of Kansas. It would also send the wrong message to our allies who have invested so much in the program alongside the United States.

Letter to The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Re: Support for the F-35 Lightning II Program
April 19, 2021
Page 2

I respectfully request that your Administration fully support the F-35 moving forward to keep this critical national security program on track. Thank you for your leadership and for all you are doing to protect our nation as Commander-In-Chief.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Laura Kelly", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Laura Kelly
Governor of Kansas

cc: The Honorable Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor to the President
cc: The Honorable Lloyd Austin, General (Ret.), Secretary of Defense
cc: The Honorable Steven Ricchetti, Senior Counselor to the President
cc: The Honorable Cedric Richmond, Senior Advisor to the President